Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Annual Report

November 2000

House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

101-01252/

Hon. Murray Scott
Speaker
House of Assembly
Province House
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Speaker:

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I am pleased to submit the 1999 / 2000 Report of the Committee for the First Session of the Fifty-Eighth General Assembly.

Respectively submitted,

William Langille

William Langille, MLA
(Colchester North)
Chairman
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Halifax, Nova Scotia
2000

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Foreward

Although there is no written mandate of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, the report was written with the understanding that the committee be established for the purpose of considering matters pertaining to Veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Legion.

The report is written under individualized headings outlining the concerns and issues brought forth from each group /organization.

Royal Canadian Legion

On November 18, 1999, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs had met with members of the Royal Canadian Legion to discuss some pressing issues and concerns that were of importance to this Organization.

Millennium Project

The legion had proudly discussed their millennium project with the Standing Committee. It was a project initiated by the legion to reinstate the "Two Minute Wave of Silence" to mark the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in memory of those 116,000 Canadians who had given their lives during the five wars of this century. It was requested of the Standing Committee to make a resolution to this in the Legislature to enact the "Two Minutes of Silence".

Video Lottery Terminals

The Royal Canadian Legion felt they were not being dealt with fairly regarding the VLT machines that were placed on their premises. They were being compared categorically with bar owners and private clubs who operate VLT's for profit whereas the legions are non-profit organizations who contribute most of their funding throughout communities. Funding that comes not only from VLT's, but from fundraising efforts, bingo's and the like. The RCL does not only represent veterans and seniors but also many provincial and community involvements. At one point the legion had contributed $1.5 million in community funding.

Profits received from the VLT's and other funding sources not only go to veterans and senior organizations, and communities, but out of these profits the legions must also pay for phone lines, insurance on the machines, and building maintenance.

> **"It was requested by the Royal Canadian Legion that the Alcohol and Gaming Authority allow them to receive a fair share of the profits to enable the Legion to help support community efforts."**

It was also brought to the attention of the Standing Committee that several legions throughout the province had received letters from the Alcohol and Gaming Authority notifying them that if machines on the premises do not make a minimum of $275 per week per machine the machines will be removed from the premises within six months.

Due to the concerns of the RCL on this issue, the Standing Committee had issued a motion to:

> **Notify the Alcohol and Gaming Authority requesting them to provide the status on the nature of these letters. Is the requirement that the Legions make $275 per week/machine still in effect or nullified?**
>
> **Response to this request stated that on December 8, 1999 the Government of Nova Scotia asked that "the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation put its plan to move some VLT's to establishment where there was higher demand on hold. Accordingly, the NSGC has asked the Atlantic Lottery Corporation not to proceed with VLT redeployment activities at this time."**

Call To Remembrance / History Curriculum

The Royal Canadian Legion's "Call to Remembrance" program is making some progress in the schools, however its objective is to have 100% participation. With this in mind the Royal Canadian Legion had made the point, several times in the past, that the history of Canada's involvement in the two world wars, Korea, merchant marines and peacekeepers be integrated into the provincial school system as a subject and part of a history course.

Very little information on Canadian military history is found in textbooks today. An Angus Reid survey suggests Canadians do not know very much about Canadian war history. Of the 1,500 Canadians surveyed slightly more than half failed the test. A majority of those under the age of 25 answered three-quarters of the questions wrong. Only one-third knew the significance of Vimy Ridge, and almost one in four thought D-Day marked the bombing of Pearl Harbour.

The lack of knowledge about Canada's military history comes as no surprise as Canadian history is not a mandatory high school course in provincial schools.

> **"It was requested by the Royal Canadian Legion that the Canada's military history be implemented into provincial schools as part of the history curriculum."**

To this end a motion was made by the Standing Committee to:

> **Notify the Department of Education and set up a meeting with Department Officials, the Royal Canadian Legion and the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to discuss the implementation of Canada's involvement in the two world wars, Korea, merchant marines and peacekeepers into the provincial school system as a subject and part of a history course.**
> **Response to this request from the Department of Education was well received and a meeting was set up for May 11, 2000.**

As quoted, "this will be an attempt to educate our younger generations to remember our history and bring it forward into the future."

During the meeting of May 11, 2000 the Department of Education Officials had given a very concise presentation of the social studies/history curriculum presently in provincial schools. Curricula is jointly developed in many areas in conjunction with Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, and coordinated by the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation.

Curriculum under development through APEF for future implementation will be the revamping of the social studies curriculum from Primary through to Grade 8. Grade 3 students will study their province and heritage including aspects of Nova Scotia and Canada's role in the World Wars. At the Junior High Level the proposed curriculum for Grade 7&8 social studies will require an in-depth study of Canada's role in World War I, II and peacekeeping. The Grade 7 curriculum will focus on Canada from the early 1800's to the 1920's picking up on World War I, and the Grade 8 curriculum from 1920's to present day picking up on World War II and peacekeeping.

In the Senior High School Program the APEF have begun a review of high school history courses including Canadian History. The Acadian-francophone students will have a new course called "Histoire de l'Acadie et Canada 11". This course will replace their Grade 12 history course. Canadian history and the teaching of Canadian history is currently being developed to be implemented as a compulsory at the high school level.

A number of authorized learning resources are available to students that particularly support the study of World Wars I, II, the Korean Conflict and Peacekeeping efforts. Kits from the Department of Veterans Affairs are readily available and are excellent resource documents, also there are a number of Heritage Minutes videos that are available.

According to Department of Education Officials the curriculum currently being developed will not be available for this school year. Once it is developed it will be piloted in various schools. It is currently being proposed and will be directed to the Minister of Education.

During this meeting the Standing Committee passed a motion supporting the position of the Royal Canadian Legion on the following:

> **We the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs support the Provincial Command of the Royal Canadian Legion's proposal to integrate Canadian military history into our provincial school system as a compulsory subject and part of a history course.**

War Memorials

As part of the 1999/2000 budget the Nova Scotia Government announced that assistance to the Royal Canadian Legion to maintain war memorials was granted. However with the change in government the Legion expressed grave concern to the Standing Committee seeking clarification on whether this assistance was still in effect or nullified. The assistance was to be a reduction of the repair cost through a rebate program on the provincial portion of the HST paid on material and labor. This rebate amounted to 8%.

The Standing Committee passed a motion to write to the Department of Finance outlining the past decision of the previous Minister of Finance and to:

> **Inquire if the 8% rebate is still in effect and if not can it be reviewed and reinstated?**
>
> **Response to this inquiry was that "the rebate program was in its early stages of development when the election was called. Currently all government programs and proposed initiatives are being reviewed; and will be considered in due course."**

Track and Field Facilities

There are only three provinces in Canada that cannot host the National Track and Field Meet; Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. Athletics Nova Scotia, who coordinates the National Meets of the Royal Canadian Legion, had advised the Municipality of what was required to enhance Beazley Field. They also mentioned that Metropolitan Field in Lower Sackville is not yet up to National Standards, and none of the Nova Scotia Universities have the required facilities necessary for these Meets. The Royal Canadian Legion was promised, by the Municipality, that Beazley Field would be ready for the 2000 Meet, however the Meet had to be cancelled due to further deterioration of the field. It was requested of the Standing Committee that

> **"The Province should look into the matter of rejuvenating Beazley and Metropolitan Fields in conjunction with the Municipality to bring the field up to National Standards so that the Royal Canadian Legion can host the annual Track and Field Meets."**

The Standing Committee had passed a motion to write to the Halifax Regional Municipality with the request of the Royal Canadian Legion requesting a report on the status of Beazley and Metropolitan Fields and whether there will be any upgrading initiatives in the upcoming capital budget to meet the requirements of Track and Field National Standards.

As a result, the Standing Committee had received a response from HRM stating that:

> **". . . Dalhousie University did have an eight lane artificial track but that has not been restored. Saint Mary's track is also artificial, but does not have eight full lanes. In regard to Beazley and Metropolitan Fields, some recent achievements have been made at the fields, however problems arose within the storage areas, locker rooms, washrooms and the bleachers of Beazley Field which is projected to cost $200,000 to make the building completely operational. This will be addressed by the Municipality during the 2000/2001 Capital Budget. There was much discussion on developing two artificial surfaces to host national calibre events. Beazley was built to host such an event, but has limited club use. Metropolitan has a very good club participation, but lacks amenities such as parking and seating facilities. A decision will be made in 2000 to determine the best location to cater to such events."**

Health and Home Care

Several other concerns brought before the Standing Committee centered on Pharmacare and the fact that seniors and veterans who are on public service insurance plans do not pay double premiums, but others who have private plans do.

> **"It was requested that the Standing Committee seek clarification on why these seniors and veterans are still paying double premiums."**

The level of stress placed upon care givers and the difficulty care givers have in accessing information on services available in the province was another concern brought forth to the Standing Committee.

> **"It was requested that increased respite care hours be made available through Home Care Nova Scotia and designated respite beds be established in long-term care facilities; as well as establishing a central point from which informal care givers can have access to information on services."**

Volunteer Services provided in the western region of Nova Scotia offer programs and services for older persons who require daily care and support. These volunteers receive training, support, recognition and encouragement by the Coordinators of Volunteer Services. Although they are funded in part by the Regional Health Board and Home Care Nova Scotia,

> **"It is requested that these services should be sustained and broadened to include other areas of the province which do not presently have access to funding."**

In response to the above requests the Standing Committee passed a motion to forward a letter of request to the Department of Health addressing these issues. The following response was:

> **". . . Effective April 1, 1999 seniors with Private Drug Insurance are no longer eligible for coverage under the Nova Scotia Seniors Pharmacare Program. This was amended in response to the issues of seniors paying two premiums and to ensure that seniors with Private Drug Insurance in Nova Scotia receive the same benefits as seniors with the same insurance living in other provinces. Regarding stress levels placed upon care givers, monies have been made available to increase in-home respite care and increase funding to adult day programs. All respite services will be accessed through the single entry access model being developed."**

Pearson Peacekeeping Centre

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs had met with the President of the Lester B. Pearson Canadian International Peacekeeping Training Centre. Mr. Morrison had given an excellent presentation on the peacekeeping facility and its activities.

The Facility

The Peacekeeping Training Centre was established in 1994 by the Government of Canada to enhance the Canadian contribution to international peace, security and stability by providing research, education and training opportunities in all aspects of peacekeeping to civilian and military people from around the world.

The Peacekeeping Centre operates independently at arm's-length of the Government of Canada, governed by a Board of Directors, and is not a government organization even though it was established and is funded mainly by the government. Operations began in 1995 with well over 1,500 people attending courses and approximately another 1,000 people participating in other activities of the Centre, amounting to over 2,500 people from 125 countries in attendance at the Centre within the last five years.

Peacekeeping is not purely a military activity, it is a conflict resolution activity best engaged in by professionally trained civilian and military peacekeepers working together to make the best use of their resources. As the Peacekeeping Centre implements its mandate and accomplishes its mission, it is hoped that in the future Canadians will never have to go to war again.

Activities

Some of the activities undertaken at Pearson Peacekeeping Centre is the conduct of courses. Each course is two weeks long made up of 30-35 military and civilian people from about 20 countries and is academically recognized by Canadian and American Universities. The Centre offers about 15 regular courses per year as well as special courses and seminars. The Centre also boasts of a Canadian Peacekeeping Press and publishes 8-10 books per year.

Since March 1996, the Peacekeeping Centre has been involved in major peacekeeping exercises in Canada and abroad. The aim is to impress upon the military that peacekeeping is not a purely military activity, that due attention must be paid to cooperation with civilians, and that a military commander cannot spend 100% of available time on purely military matters.

Although the Centre charges for its courses, they also have a very extensive scholarship program for non-military personnel. A two week course is approximately $2,300 and includes transportation to and from Halifax International Airport, tuition, materials, participation in all events and accommodations and meals. There are a lot of non-military personnel who are unable to pay such an expensive course fee and, as a result, the Centre felt that a scholarship program may be beneficial to its students. Therefore it was mentioned to the Standing Committee to

> **"Do what they can to make this scholarship program known to students, interested members of the public and to those who want to learn more about peacekeeping."**

As well as the scholarship program, the Centre also has an intern program. At any one time the Centre has about 12 - 15 students from about 10 countries who come to the Centre for six months to one year as an intern. Since the start of the intern program it has been very successful in placements and now have former interns working in the Privy Council Office in Ottawa, at UNICEF and UNESCO in Paris, and at the OSCE in Vienna, working with peacekeeping forces in Kosovo and East Timor.

In 1995 the Centre created the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres, and provide secretariat co-directors. They are also involved in an initiative with the League of Peaceful Schools where they bring students to Cornwallis and teach them compromise, consensus, and the know-how to solve quarrels other than physical contact. The Centre had also, over the years, established firm bonds with members of the community who have served as sponsors for course participants fostering international exchanges.

Unfortunately the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre is better known outside Canada and Nova Scotia than within its own borders. To this end, the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre has requested to the Standing Committee to

> **"Initiate resolutions in the Legislature recognizing the work of the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre; provide recognition of the Centre and its achievements in speeches and various provincial publications."**

As quoted, "the programs of the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre are open on a fee basis and on a scholarship basis equally to any citizen in any country of the world who wished to take part in our activities".

Prisoner of War

Mr. William Gibson presented to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs an intensive, and very moving account of being held , with other Canadians, a prisoner of war in a German concentration camp during World War II.

Flying Officer William Gibson and 25 other Canadian Prisoners who were held in Buchenwald Concentration Camp during the Second World War suffered the indignity and atrocities of that war over the months they were incarcerated. Since then [1945] these survivors and descendants had been fighting for compensation and have to-date not received any monies.

In comparison to other countries, the Australian and New Zealand Governments did compensate their own people because of the treaty that was made in 1945 between the United Kingdom and Germany. The agreement was to pay all allied prisoners who were mistreated in German Concentration Camps, however the treaty excluded any colonies. At that time Canada was a colony, as was Australia and New Zealand, therefore the money went to Great Britain instead - "Canada never did see one cent of it"

As quoted, "we did receive some compensation from the Canadian Government. I don't want the Canadian money and neither do any of our boys. It is not up to them [Canadian Government] to pay us. We want the German Government to pay us. They are the ones that put us where we were. Why should the people of Canada take on that responsibility? When Herr Schroder decides to pay us, then we will get our money, not until."

It was stated that Chancellor Schroder did make a public statement in a Toronto Newspaper that the German Government would be paying all victims of Nazi aggression.

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs had passed a motion to write to the Federal Ministers responsible for Veterans Affairs, including the Prime Minister, all Nova Scotian MP's, and all Federal Party Leaders to

> **"Urge the German Government to compensate the 26 Canadian Prisoners of War (or their descendants) who were held in Buchenwald during World War II."**

Response was received from several Federal Members with the promise of consideration and to report back to the Standing Committee in due course.

STATEMENT OF SUBMISSION

All of which is respectfully submitted to the House of Assembly
this 23 day of November, 2000

Mr. William Langille, MLA (Chairman)
(Colchester - North)

I concur

Mrs. Mary Ann McGrath, MLA
(Halifax Bedford Basin)

I concur

Mr. David Wilson, MLA
(Cape Breton East)

I concur

Mr. David Morse, MLA
(Kings South)

I concur

Mr. Wayne Gaudet, MLA
(Clare)

I concur

Mr. Cecil O'Donnell, MLA
(Shelburne)

I concur

Mr. John Holm, MLA
(Sackville Cobequid)

I concur

Mr. Mark Parent, MLA
(Kings North)

I concur

Mr. Jerry Pye, MLA
(Dartmouth North)

Committee Membership

During the 1st Session of the 58th General Assembly of the House of Assembly, the make-up of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs was comprised of the following members (as at October 7, 1999):

Mr. William Langille, MLA (Chairman)
(Colchester North)

Mrs. Mary Ann McGrath, MLA
(Halifax Bedford Basin)

Mr. David Morse, MLA
(Kings South)

Mr. David Hendsbee, MLA
(Preston)

Dr. Mark Parent, MLA
(Kings North)

Mr.David Wilson, MLA
(Cape Breton East)

Mr. Brian Boudreau, MLA
(Cape Breton the Lakes)

Ms. Eileen O'Connell, MLA
(Halifax Fairview)

Mr. Jerry Pye, MLA
(Dartmouth North)

As at May 19, 2000 the Committee membership had been amended to replace Mr. David Hendsbee, MLA (Preston) with Mr. Cecil O'Donnell, MLA (Shelburne); and on November 6, 2000 Ms. O'connell was officially replaced by Mr. John Holm, MLA (Sackville Cobequid).

On September 27, 2000, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs had lost one of its members to illness —— Ms. Eileen O'Connell, MLA (Halifax Fairview). Eileen had lost her battle with breast cancer on September 27, 2000. She will be truly missed.

Committee Meetings

The Standing Committee has been meeting on Thursdays since its establishment, and all meetings are open to the public. During the 1st Session of the 58th General Assembly the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has met on the following dates.

October 14, 1999
October 21, 1999
November 18, 1999
December 2, 1999
February 24, 2000
April 27, 2000
May 11, 2000

Notices

Notices of committee meetings are sent to all members of the Committee, support staff of the caucus and legislative offices, the House of Assembly Press Gallery, the government wire services and is published on the internet.

Transcripts

Transcripts of the Committee meetings are available from the Legislative Committees Office, 3rd Floor, Dennis Building, 1740 Granville Street, P.O. Box 2630 Station M, Halifax, NS B3J 3N5 or from the provincial government web-site: www.gov.ns.ca/hansard.

Annual/Interim Reports

All reports of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs are compiled by the Legislative Committees Office and forwarded to the committee members for consideration. Once the report is finalized it is then distributed as follows:

> The Speaker/Clerk of the House of Assembly; all members of the Legislative Assembly; all presenters who made presentations before the Committee; all Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Libraries across Canada, including the Territories and the media. The report is also available to all persons interested in obtaining a copy from the Legislative Committees Office or through the provincial government web-site.

Acknowledgments

The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs wishes to extend its gratitude to the following for their time and cooperation:

> The Royal Canadian Legion: Pearson Peacekeeping Centre and Mr. William Gibson; to Mr. Mr. Rodney Caley, Editor of Hansard; Hansard Staff; to Mr. Don Ledger, Co-ordinator of Legislative Television and Broadcasting; Legislative Television Staff; to Mr. Michael Laffin, Co-ordinator, House of Assembly Operations; House of Assembly Staff; and to Margaret Murphy, Legislative Librarian and Librarian Staff.